

terview with representatives of Doubleday, Page & Co. held with Louis Joseph Vance, the noted and avowed author of a number of the most popular best sellers of the last few years, tells how he broke into the writing game:

"Breaking into the writing game is such a nursing business. As we look with married envy and reverence at the author who has arrived and is the happy parent of a dozen best sellers, we wonder, those of us who have never tried it, why every one doesn't do it, and the rest of us how any one ever did. Louis Joseph Vance, the king

of mystery romance, tells how it happened with him. "I broke in," he chuckled, "with pen and ink, the way you say first: I wrote a typewriter. *Slam!*—and I was down, groans, maulings, and a lot of little things like that likewise played parts of course. Oh, yes, and bills and bills and bills." Mr. Vance disclaims being an infant prodigy, but the impulse to write came early. "Like a fair majority of selling-people, I began to write the games," says "I began to have to be scribbling more or less aimlessly ever since I can remember. I distinctly recall writing a pathetic sketch about a noble bellboy in a hotel, on school exercise paper, at about the age of 11. I couldn't have been older, because, as is well known, no person as to nobility or talent in bellboys do not survive the 12th birthday. And then, only the other

day, I found, while overhauling some old papers, a copy of *Fact*, the Young People's paper for 1903, to which I had contributed gratis a half-column account of life in a newspaper editorial room. In the same year the same department, the Round Table, of the same publication, printed a short article of mine descriptive of the library of congress at Washington. I was not at all sure that there had been at about that age that I discovered that writing was work; for, aside from one or two dimly remembered essays in predestined futility, I did no writing that I can recall until I was 20. Then, finding myself a father after two years of being an irresponsible husband, and being to boot sorely in need of money, I set out on an inadequate wage which I was then earning in a clerical position, began to write again. I

did first a tragic short story of the Civil war, which my friends praised and which I liked, although I did sell the fool thing twice or three years later, in abbreviated form, for \$25. My second short story, "a western," as we call it nowadays, sold immediately to a newspaper syndicate— for \$25!—and the Sun used it in its Sunday edition. I was a good newspaper then, the Sun was, and I reckoned myself an established author and wrote a lot more, of a few which were salable, generally for \$25, most of which died a-borning. Then, for a year or so, I wrote and peddled to newspapers with pages devoted to children, a lot of rhymes and stories for children; as much as \$10 or \$12. Then somebody told me that the average novel went about 100,000 words in length and I felt

ured that by writing 1,500 words per night for a little over two months I could produce a novel, and do it, and sold it for \$250 to the New York magazine for \$500, and knew that I was a regular author at last, and resigned my clerical job—which I had been holding down for the sake of its \$23 per week all along—and launched out as a free lance writer and came damned near to starving before I sold anything more.

"Oh, yes," he continued, "those were days of industry. There was the time I wrote two-thirds of a popular price magazine which was launched about that time—two-thirds of its first issue, that is, and more than one-third of the stuff it published in its first year, using no less than seven pen names to cover it. It was difficult, but my multiplicity in

His pages, wrote day and night, sometimes turning out more than 12,000 words in 24 hours, and kept at it for about three years until by some freak The Brass Bowl made a hit with the public and more money for me than I had ever dreamed was in the writing game, so that I could afford the time to lay off and take life more easily and grow self-conscious about my writing.

"People are always asking me how I write my stories, whether I prepare synopses, whether I use a pencil, whether I wear a dressing gown or a monocle while writing, and the time of day when I write best. . . . Well! Sometimes I prepare synopses, sometimes I don't.

"When I'm hitting on all six I work practically day and night till the story is finished, use a type-

draftier, and on 4, write the first draft of the story, always at night. The next day I cut up and generally revise this first draft with a fountain pen, and my typewriter makes me a clean copy of it, and I cut that up and revise it again, until I am satisfied that I personally can do no more to improve it. But I do not stop there. I have to be done after dinner, and all the revision after breakfast."

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